Sleeper Stretch: A Simple Technique to Improve Shoulder Mobility and Reduce Pain

Shoulder stiffness and limited range of motion are common issues, especially for people who spend long hours sitting, use computers frequently, or engage in repetitive upper-body movements. One highly effective yet often overlooked technique to address these problems is the sleeper stretch. This stretch focuses on improving internal shoulder rotation and relieving tension in the posterior shoulder muscles.

The sleeper stretch is especially beneficial for athletes, desk workers, and anyone experiencing tightness or discomfort in the shoulders. When performed correctly and consistently, it can support long-term shoulder health and better movement quality.

What Is the Sleeper Stretch?

The **sleeper stretch** is a targeted shoulder stretch performed while lying on your side. It primarily stretches the posterior capsule of the shoulder and surrounding muscles, which often become tight due to poor posture, repetitive movements, or lack of mobility work.

This stretch is commonly recommended by physical therapists because it helps restore balance in the shoulder joint without requiring equipment or advanced flexibility.

Key Benefits of the Sleeper Stretch

- Improves shoulder internal rotation
- Reduces stiffness and tightness in the shoulder joint
- Supports injury prevention and recovery
- Enhances overall upper-body mobility
- Helps relieve discomfort caused by prolonged sitting or poor posture

Regular practice can lead to smoother shoulder movement and reduced strain during daily activities or workouts.

How to Perform the Sleeper Stretch Correctly

1. Lie on your side with the affected shoulder on the floor
2. Extend your arm straight out in front of you and bend the elbow to 90 degrees
3. Use your top hand to gently press the forearm toward the floor
4. Stop when you feel a mild to moderate stretch
5. Hold for 20 - 30 seconds and breathe normally
6. Repeat 2 - 3 times per side

Avoid forcing the movement, as the goal is controlled stretching, not pain.

Who Should Use This Stretch?

The sleeper stretch is ideal for:

- Office workers with shoulder tightness
- Athletes involved in throwing or overhead sports
- Individuals recovering from shoulder stiffness
- Anyone looking to maintain healthy shoulder mobility

Consistency is key. Performing this stretch a few times a week can make a noticeable difference over time.

Final Thoughts

Incorporating the sleeper stretch into your stretching routine can greatly improve shoulder comfort and mobility. It is a simple yet powerful movement that supports better posture, smoother motion, and reduced discomfort when done correctly.